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**LETTER** 5

TO THE

Right Hon. WILLIAM PITT,

SHEWING

HOW CRIMES MAY BE PREVENTED,

AND THE

PEOPLE MADE HAPPY.

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BY JOHN DONALDSON, ESQ.

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SIR,



**I**N order to prevent crimes, and make the people happy, it is necessary that several things be particularly attended to, which I most humbly take the liberty of hinting, and I am the more encouraged to do so from the several proofs you have exhibited in giving up some proposed taxes, and in altering the mode of managing others so as to make them more productive. I hope you will persevere in this, and I shall be ready to point out other Taxes that will be popular and productive. By your making this exchange, the revenue will be increased, and the people pleased. However paradoxical this may appear at first sight, or on a cursory view, yet, I know it to be so well founded, that it will bear the strictest investigation. All I wish, is a candid hearing, and the business fairly tried in order to prove its utility.

A

The

*Title*  
*Report*

The tax upon dogs is a most necessary one, and when right understood by the people will be popular and productive. In the 91<sup>st</sup>. page of Sketches of a Plan for an effectual and general reformation of life and manners, I there propose a tax on dogs, as one of the ways to raise money for the support of a constant watch, being the best method to prevent crimes. In the 118<sup>th</sup>, and 119<sup>th</sup>, pages of said Sketches, are further hints about this business of a constant watch; and it is there also mentioned, that, wherever it is adopted, the keeping of dogs for a guard to a house, &c. will be unnecessary. Indeed they never appeared to me to be of much service as a guard, being liable to be stolen, bribed, or killed, but as many people think they are not safe either day or night unless they have a dog, therefore to tax such I conceive to be a hardship, before there is a constant watch established to protect their persons and property at all times. Then house dogs will not be further needed, and so become a proper object of taxation, and the money arising from it, I humbly conceive cannot be better applied than in supporting a constant watch.

If you will do me the honor to make the trial by putting some streets and roads under my direction, you will then have a proof of the utility of this proposed watch, as hinted in the Sketch of a plan to prevent Crimes.

Besides

Besides the advantages mentioned in the 14th, and following pages of said Sketch, it will be of great use in reducing the price of provision, as there is nothing that a dog eats but what will fatten pigs and fowls, besides, it will save many a horse from being stolen and killed for dogs meat, and make the cities of London and Westminster more healthy when freed from the stench of dogs meat, which is frequently carried about the streets in a putrid state.

The houses also will be more clean and healthy when fewer dogs are kept, and those who chuse to keep them will find the price of dog's meat so much reduced, that were they to pay a tax of half a guinea for each dog, they will still be at less expence than at present; as I estimate the average expence of a dog to be three guineas a year.

I heard of a nobleman who had a fowl roasted daily for a favourite spaniel, and there are many who bestow more expence, care, and attention on their dogs than on their children; some daily buy meat dressed at the cooks shop for their dog's dinner, besides the delicate morsels they give them in the course of the day; people thus attached to dogs will pay any tax rather than be without them.

There are others who say, that their dog costs them nothing, as they buy no meat for him, he only gets the scraps that would be  
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lost;

lost ; if those people were to keep pigs and fowls they would find what is now consumed by the dog, would go a great way to maintain pigs and fowls ; or, if they will take the trouble to go to the places where the dustmen empty their carts, they will see a number of pigs feeding on what is gathered out of the dust, so when there are fewer dogs, the dustman will have more bones, &c. for his pigs, and I am confident, that when a constant watch is established, the price of pork and fowls will be reduced, as the present expence of dogs is above six millions a year. If only one half of this sum is saved from the dogs by the tax, it will fatten many thousands of pigs and fowls ; there is a great advantage in keeping fowls, besides that of their eggs, feathers, and flesh ; they pick up worms, flies, caterpillars, and other vermin that are so hurtful to our fields and gardens ; and I believe I can shew, that by the keeping a greater number of bee-hives, besides the well-known profit of the honey and wax, that we shall have a greater quantity of fruit, particularly apples and pears.

I humbly think that no dogs should be exempted from the tax, not even those of shepherds and butchers, as those people will be greatly benefited by the tax, reducing the number of dogs which are so destructive to their sheep in running at them, and frequently



ly killing them. A person who cannot pay the tax ought not to be permitted to keep one, such people's dogs are very troublesome to passengers by biting their horses heels; they also get through hedges, &c. and frequently destroy the game, and hurt the growing corn; besides, if they were exempted from the tax, many of them will make it a pretence to beg in order to get something for their dog, by this means promote idleness, and perhaps theft. I have always considered it as a great reflection on the well known humanity of this country who have on so many occasions shewn such generosity in the very liberal support they give even to strangers, (who frequently have proved unworthy objects of their charity) that they should permit a blind person to be led through the country by a dog; a person who has the misfortune of being blind, ought to be taken particular care of, and well provided for by their parish, but if the parish is unable to do it, a comfortable house, &c. should be provided for their accomodation at the public expence.

Some people say a dog is a good companion, and they must always have him with them, I humbly recommend to them to take a child or young person of their own sex and bring them up, they will find more satisfaction and usefulness in such a companion than in all the dogs or beasts in the world; and they can be at  
no

no loss to find out worthy children of respectable people, who have been unfortunate and would be happy to see their children thus provided for.

But in order to make the people happy, something more is necessary besides the preventing of crimes; employment must be found for idle people, and provisions reduced to such a price that every industrious person and those of small fortunes may live comfortably.

With a view to this I took the liberty of writing to you the 15th, of April, 1795, stating, that by the quantity of wheat consumed in the making starch and hair-powder, the price of bread was materially affected. In the postscript of the said letter, I mentioned the quantity, of wheat thus expended in one year, would have made sixty millions of quarter-loaves, which, at one shilling and threepence each, the price fixed by the Lord Mayor the 25th of February last, is three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds, British money, and about one fifth part of the loaf bread annually made in Great Britain for sale.

His Majesty has been pleased to forbid the use of hair-powder in the army, which is a saving of one guinea and a half a year to each soldier, and the making of starch and hair-powder has been prohibited by act of parliament, which are proofs that my hints on



this business were well founded, I have been informed the quantity of wheat consumed in the making one pound of starch or hair-powder, would make a quartern-loaf, and that it takes nine pounds of potatoes or of horse-chestnuts to make one pound of starch, which some hair-dressers will expend at one time in dressing one head.

When the Duke of Orleans was in London, besides being dressed several times a day, he was highly dressed in the evening; he had eighteen wax candles to light the dressing-room, and several valets to dress his hair, in which they spent some hours. A noble duke of this country had a Frenchman to cut and dress his hair, who made his Grace out a bill of three guineas for once dressing and cutting only, the Frenchman also provided the ribbon, powder, pomatum, &c, so that his Grace was at no further expence for that day's dressing.

A gentleman near St. James's street, pays his hair-dresser one guinea a week, and the expence of powder, pomatum, &c. comes to two guineas a week more. Not being able fully to satisfy myself what is proper to state as the average expence of hair-dressing, have given the above three instances, and I humbly hope Sir, you will think I state the expence moderate at ten guineas a year each, without including the licence, and suppose there

there are only two hundred thousand people who take out licences, or are exempted by the act, this amounts to two millions of guineas annually thrown away upon an unnecessary piece of dress, to the great prejudice of the public in raising the price of bread, promoting idleness, pride and vanity, making a distinction between those who use hair-powder, and those who do not, which I humbly think should not be permitted in a free country; I believe it will promote discontents, which may produce much mischief; many of the clergy are not on the best terms with their parishioners, and their differences may perhaps be increased, when they see the parson exacting his tythes with rigour, and, at the same time, throwing away on his head what many of the parish would be glad to put in their belly; besides, in time it may become dangerous to those who use hair-powder, if the people were to oppose it with the same spirit they did the act for naturalizing the Jews, no person who wore it would be safe to walk the streets: sharpers, thieves, pickpockets, &c. would, under the pretence of their raising the price of bread, take every opportunity of robbing them or using them ill.

I humbly hope, that all who have families may fully consider this matter, and give up the use of hair-powder, and every thing else that occasions unnecessary waste; how can they

they expect their children, servants, and others about them to have œconomy and industry when they give them such proofs of the contrary by their example ; we ought to remember that example goes further than precept.

I suppose the average loss of time in hair-dressing, is one hour a day, which I estimate at the eighth part of our time, as many people spend sixteen hours a day in eating, drinking and sleeping, &c. which leaves only eight hours for business. I further suppose there are one hundred thousand rooms used for powdering in, which, if turned into a family library, would greatly promote useful knowledge, and prevent idleness and dissipation, as the whole of the family by means of this proposed library, will have it in their power to employ every spare minute, either in amusement or instruction, and prevent their going abroad in search of what they can have at home ; in this way they run less risk of getting into bad company, and they will be always at hand when wanted. By converting the powdering room into a family library, printers, book-sellers and all the different branches of trade and manufactures connected with them, will be greatly extended, the people made wiser and better, and the revenue much increased by the duties on paper, &c. becoming more productive.

Notwithstanding all I have said about the tax for wearing hair-powder, I am certain it has done much good, by greatly lessening the consumption of wheat, &c. and I humbly hope, when you re-consider this business, that you will bring in a bill to prohibit the use of it (which will be well received by many who have not sufficient fortitude entirely to give up a bad custom, though they are sensible it wastes both their time and their money), if not that you will considerably increase the licence duty. Many people complain that servants, even negroes should be allowed to take out licences, to use a supposed luxury in dress, not worn by many of their superiors; besides it is hurtful to the hair, and occasions many a bald head; it is used to conceal defects, to make some people appear what they are not: no jeweller paints a diamond to increase its beauty or value.

In the Gentleman's Magazine for June, 1785, page 450, a request is made to know how to take off hairs from the cheek of a young person, who was born with as much hair on one cheek, as on the crown of the head. In a subsequent Magazine the person is directed to use flour, as millers have no hairs upon their hands. Flour is so well known at Lancaster to have a bad effect upon candles in turning them soft, that no merchant in that town will ship candles for the



West Indies, on board of any vessel which carries out either flour or meal: how it operates is not known, but the fact cannot be denied; it appears to me as mysterious as fermentation or vegetation, and I am convinced, when hair-powder is discontinued, that there will be fewer bald-heads. Whatever effect powder may have on the head, it is a common observation that millers and dealers in flour, &c. are in general deaf, unfeeling and harder-hearted to the poor, than any other set of people.

As some seem to doubt what is said, of the rat in the 16th page of my former letter, I can assure them that I believe it to be a fact; I have also been informed by different people, that they frequently find mice biting at their night caps, and that some have even caught and killed them there; mice would not resort to beds if it were not for the hair-powder.

Such as wish to have their hair preserved may get that secret as mentioned in the 18th page of my former letter, and if they have any doubt of the advantage proposed, the money may be lodged with a banker, till they are satisfied.

Formerly no young man could find employment in London, unless he wore a wig to give him what they then termed the appearance of a tradesman. At Newcastle the

apprentices wore their hair, but that no unnecessary time might be spent in dressing it, they had a dish made, and which they still keep for putting on the head of the apprentice, then all the hair that is seen beyond the edge of the dish is cut off. About thirty years ago, the hair-dressers petitioned his majesty to wear a wig, which request was not granted, and now Sir, when you by the hair-powder licences, have done the business more fully they are not satisfied. There are many acts of parliament, and also societies formed to enforce the due observation of the Lord's day, and in 1792, the bakers had an act passed, to restrain them from working on that day, but this act for licencing the wearing of hair-powder, seems a contrast to those acts and societies, as the hair-dresser's chief business is on the Sunday.

I had the honor of writing to, and speaking with the honourable committee on the corn bill, when the chairman did me the honor to say that he approved of my ideas. What I wished to lay before the honourable committee, was a certain method to prevent all mistakes in the weight of bread, that the poor may be supplied at the same price with the rich, and shewed by the weight of sundry small loaves, that the purchasers of them pay on an average, a half-penny a pound more than the assize price, which falls chiefly on the



the poor, who are the best customers to the baker, as they pay the money before they carry the bread away. I therefore propose that the weight of all loaf bread should be made permanent, and that the loaves should be weighed with a weight of one piece only, which would require but seven different weights, viz: peck, half-peck, quartern, half-quartern or one eighth, a sixteenth, a thirty-second and a sixty fourth part of a peck, and that all who sold bread should have weights and scales, where the purchasers may weigh the loaf or see it weighed, in either scale they please, before they take it away. That the magistrates who at present fix the price of bread should continue to do so, but the weight to be permanent.

I further proposed that all grain, flour, &c. should be sold by weight, in place of measure, and that sixty four pounds should be estimated as equal to a bushel, because this weight divides without a fraction. I also proposed that the peck of flour in London, of fourteen pounds, should be fixed at sixteen pounds, and the baker allowed a seventh part more for baking, and the assize of bread increased a seventh part in weight; in this way no other weights will be needed than those now in use, which ought to be so regulated, that it may not be in the power of the feller to substitute one weight in place of another.

Butchers

Butchers meat is sold in London by the stone, of eight pounds; if they are permitted to have a seven pound weight in their house, it may happen to be used in place of the stone or eight pounds: I likewise mentioned that potatoes, turnips, carrots, parsnips, and cabbages baked in the oven was a good substitute for bread, that they only required to be washed before they were put in the oven; that the skin of the turnips and hard part of the cabbage was good food, and all of them better eating, and more wholesome than when dressed in the common way. If those roots, &c. were fairly tried, they will much lessen the consumption of bread. The Rev. Mr. Lorimer's letter, to the honourable committee, on the importation of rough rice, as a supplement to wheat-flower, sold by T. Becket, Pall mall, furnishes many judicious hints on this business. I see by the act of parliament passed the 24th December last, bakers are allowed to make half-quartern loaves, I humbly hope they will also be empowered to make the three other loaves that I had the honor of proposing, and that the magistrate will be authorized to receive informations for the deficiency of weight in all loaves smaller than quarterns, when they are half an ounce short of weight; at present they receive no informations for less than one ounce, which secures the bakers from being fined when they give short weight in

in small bread. The present method of the bakers selling flour, is to charge the same price as for the loaf bread, allowing at the rate of fourteen pounds for a peck, so that they get ten shillings a sack profit; but I am told that some of them sell the finest flour at double the price of bread, and when the flour was at ninety shillings a sack, in place of selling it at five pounds, the price of bread, they sold it at the rate of ten pounds. This great profit encourages the millers to make a finer sort of flour than what is used in loaf bread, so the remainder is of an inferior sort, and the cause of so much bad loaf-bread being made. I have not been able to see or hear of any household bread to be sold, though it is inserted in the assize tables every week. I humbly propose that all loaf-bread, which is not marked with a W for wheaten, as the law directs, should be considered, and sold as household, except such mixed bread as is made according to the act of the 24th December last.

In order to prevent the millers from making fine flour to the prejudice of the other sort, I humbly propose, that the magistrates be empowered to fix the price of flour, at the same rate they do the wheaten-loaf, by which means the bakers will still have their profit of ten shillings a sack, and the public better bread. When weights are used in place of measures

tures, it will be necessary that the public be provided with such as may be depended on. A just balance, and exact weights are seldom to be met with, which occasions many people to hurt themselves or their customers; unless the balance is true, and the weights just, the most careful person may deceive or be deceived. I shall mention one instance; above forty years ago, Messrs. Alex. Brown and Company, of Edinburgh, got a balance made by that ingenious artist, the late Mr. Gray, of the Iron Miln near Dalkeith, with which they weighed a quantity of tobacco, which had been weighed by the king's balance, belonging to the custom-house of Leith, and proved it to be erroneous. They got back from the revenue, about five hundred pounds, which had been overcharged to them.

There was no blame to be imputed to his majesty's officers; the error was occasioned by a deceitful balance, and clearly shews the necessity of having true ones. If you will do me the honor to put this business of providing just balances and weights, under my care, you may depend that the public shall be faithfully supplied; I by no means wish to have an exclusive privilege of either making or vending them, to the prejudice of those who are now in that business, my desire is, that all who wish to have just weights and balances, may know



know where they can be had, and also where they may have their present ones proved, and if necessary adjusted.

To conclude, I have shewn the great expence of keeping dogs, and the advantage of lessening their number, in order to reduce the price of pork and fowls. I have stated the loss of time in hair-dressing to be one eighth part, and that the expence, besides the tax, is two millions a year. I suppose not above one in ten, who use hair-powder, pay the tax out of their own pocket from any attachment to it, but from some other motives ; in this way I reduce the number of those who use hair-powder from choice, to twenty thousand, and I conceive it to be hard that such a hurtful custom should be permitted to the injury of ten millions of people in this country. I have pointed out the advantage of turning the powdering-room into a family-library, by means of which, idleness will be prevented, the family well instructed, and so become a wise and understanding people. I have found by introducing several new things, that the obstinacy of the people proceeds chiefly from ignorance, misconception, or wrong information ; when I got these removed, my schemes were approved of. When crimes are prevented, and the people better instructed, yet we cannot expect them to be happy, unless they

are fully employed, and that the earnings of their honest industry are sufficient to procure them a comfortable livelyhood, which cannot be done till provisions are sold at a reasonable price.

When the constant watch is adopted, and approved of, I mean to shew how bread, and some other necessaries of life may be sold at fixed prices, the same as porter is in London. By this means the inhabitants of Great Britain will live comfortably, our trade and manufactures flourish, the poors rates reduced, and the people happy. In order to accomplish this great end, nothing should be omitted that has a tendency to promote it; I therefore humbly propose, that the prisons should be cleared, and fugitives permitted to return, for the reasons stated in the Sketches of a Plan for an Effectual and General Reformation of Life and Manners, and also in my other pamphlets mentioned at the end of this letter, to which I beg leave to refer, and likewise to what the sundry Reviews have said of those pamphlets to which the postscript refers.

It is evident that the conductors of the present watch find it defective, or they would not have altered the time of setting it, from ten, to five o'clock, and also shews they have profited by my hints on this subject.

May



May I again humbly request your attention and support to the constant watch, in order to prevent crimes, and make the people happy, when you may depend on my not only showing how every thing I have proposed may be done, not in theory only, but by actually performing all, I have undertaken, and also instructing others how to conduct the different parts of the business. Many people have offered to subscribe, in order to defray the expence, if I will make a beginning in some of the most public streets, which kind offer I declined, as I well know that no great plan can have any prospect of success, unless it has the co-operation of government, which makes me the more earnest in my application to you, sir, our present prime minister. The mail-coaches never would have been adopted had not administration given its hearty support to them. It is too arduous a task for an individual to attempt any plans of great public utility, or national reformation, further than by writing, unless government give their steady support, as they do to the sundry branches of revenue. I had a proof of this last summer, when his majesty's most honourable privy council, recommended the making of standard-bread; Mr. M'Kewan, baker, of Litchfield-street, made some of that bread, for which he was fined; I did not give credit

dit to the newspaper account of this matter, till I called on Mr. McKewan, when he told me it was a fact, and that he had ordered the justice to be prosecuted, but by some neglect of his attorney, the action did not go on.

I have the honor to be,

With the greatest respect,

Sir, your most humble and

Most obedient servant,

London,  
July 4, 1796.



THE AUTHOR.

P. S. If you take the trouble to look into the Reviews for 1795, you will see what they say of my five publications.

The Critical, for March, page 316, 333, and 334. For April, page 353, and for November, page 331.

The Monthly, for May, pages 112 and 113; for July, page 343, and for November, page 331.

The English Review, for June, page 451; and for July, page 7.

The Analytical for April, page 428; and for August, page 213.

The British Critic, for August, page 101; and for November, page 560.

FINIS.